administration, and becomes, therefore, as to him, an act of present hostility. Mr. Buchanan cannot resist, because he has not the power, Mr. Lincoln may not attack, because the cause of the quarrel will have been, or may be, considered by him as past."

No one can fail to note the sagacity shown by these observations. It would no doubt have been fortunate for the Southern Confederacy if its authorities had felt themselves in a position to follow Governor Pickens's counsel; for it is very improbable that Mr. Buchanan would have felt himself authorized to call the North to arms if Sumter had been attacked while he was President, and it is almost certain that Mr. Lincoln would never have taken the risk involved in beginning an aggressive war against the South in retaliation for any past act, no matter how flagrant.[1]

In pursuance of the policy laid down in the Governor's letter, the arrangements for reducing the fort proceeded towards completion, A council of war was ordered for the 19th,[2] to consider the details for the attack. Whether it would have been possible at that time to capture the fort is, to say the least, very doubtful; the chances were decidedly against success.[8] But the attempt was not made. The Confederate Congress had already passed—

on the 15th

[1] See comments of Hon. Montgomery Blair in *Conf. Doc.*, p. 359,

[2] *Conf. Doc.*, p. 374.

[3] On this point the opinion of Major John Johnson, late of the Engineer Corps, C, S, Army, and the author of the important work entitled ***The Defence of Charleston Harbor,*** is of the highest value. His opinion it—to use his own words in a letter to the author—" dear and positive[1]* that It was not "possible for South Carolina to have taken Fort Sumter prior **to** the 4th of March, 1861."